

Bowen

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Dear John:

Everything has been going so smoothly here in Melbourne that it is almost irksome that we already have to be thinking of our return plans, but it will be no less pleasant to be back in our accustomed harness. I was pleased to hear from you about the success of the virus symposium, and the promise of the genetics one. I trust the matter of Atwood's appointment is having smooth sailing, both at Rockefeller, and in your budget analysis: if there is anything I can do or say to help at either end, please let me know. There is a steady stream of mail to and from here, and I am far from incommunicado or out of touch with the goings on at the lab, for example.

My experience at Burnet's lab is working out even rather better than my expectations, very largely because he has assigned one of his best assistants to work closely with me, so there has been no difficulty in settling in to the lab routine. I am learning a very great deal about the genetics of the influenza virus. One of my objectives, to get a first hand glimpse of the data behind Burnet's genetic theory of virulence, is well in hand; in fact, quite independently of my own criticism, he himself has been backing away from the speculative (and I thought) gratuitous proposals of a genetic system for virulence that was to be quite different from the conventional analysis in terms of linearly ordered loci. It has even been feasible for me to get well started on some new research (I spend most of my time at the Hall Institute, just a few hours a week here at Bacteriology for lectures—Esther does the difficult work of shepherding the students in the lab course.) There were some inconclusive experiments on the origin and nature of "incomplete virus"; more encouraging are some trials on the use of specific mucoprotein inhibitors as selective agents for the detection and identification of genetic recombinants.

Since my last letter, I've received a formal invitation from the Indian Government to give some lectures en route there, and as this would very nearly make up the added cost of that routing, Esther and I are considering this carefully. If we do elect that plan, and it would be a unique experience for us, we would have an itinerary approximating the following:

Lv. Melbourne Oct. 31 via Adelaide—>  
Lv. Perth Nov. 6 —> Calcutta (visit JBS Haldane)  
—> Delhi and —> Bombay (Indian Atomic Energy Comm., Biol Div)  
Lv Bombay Nov. 20 —> Milan (visit Luca Cavalli, in part to complete preparations for his anticipated visit next spring for some close collaboration) and return, via a day in London, Thanksgiving week end. I will write more particulars (for mail, etc.) if this, ~~xxxx~~ or whatever alternative materializes. Have you any advice or suggestions about India? In any case, we'll be here at Melbourne until the end of October.

flat, and one of the lab. assistants picks us up in her car every morning. On the whole living has not been too uncomfortable, except for the usual complaint: it has been rather bleak and wet more days than not, and they don't heat their houses here. You will have heard that story before. We almost regret our couple of days in Brisbane, at least it tended to be warm and sunny there, and many Melbourneites try to get to Queensland for the winter holidays.

Americans are almost too well thought of down here: hardly anything of local origin is mentioned by an Australian without some apologetic comparison to how things are supposedly done in America. There was a fascinating editorial in last week's "Age", called "Austerica--our confused culture": it intimated that Australia's imitation of American standards was going to be expressed, e.g., in motor cars, not in their mechanical performance, but in two years time in the adoption of the garish tail fins. And I don't doubt that this is on the drawing boards at Holden's right now. Another facet: in an editorial letter against night shopping hours (for which permissive legislation would be needed!)-- for an extra few bob a week it wouldn't be worth the nervous strain.

Well, I'll save the social psychology; still Australia is an interesting experience just because it does furnish a transformed image of American life, which is not the impression one gets in France or even in Britain.

Sincerely

Joshua Lederberg